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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000768

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS

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SUBJECT: ATTEMPTS TO OUST PM APPARENTLY ON HOLD

REF: A. (A) KATHMANDU 731

[1](#)B. (B) KATHMANDU 657

Classified By: AMB. MICHAEL E. MALINOWSKI. REASON: 1.5 (B,D).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Ongoing attempts by former Prime Minister and Nepali Congress Party President Girija Prasad Koirala to topple the current Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, appear to be on hold for the time being. According to the Indian Ambassador, PM Vajpayee, Minister for External Affairs Singh, Home Minister Advani, Defense Minister Fernandes and the BJP President had each discouraged Koirala during his current visit from pursuing a no-confidence motion. In an April 17 meeting with Nepali Congress Party General Secretary (and Koirala cousin) Sushil Koirala, the Ambassador stressed the importance of a united political front to face down the threat from the Maoist insurgency. Sushil Koirala seemed to take the message on board--albeit somewhat grudgingly--and did not raise the subject of a change in government. Although G.P. Koirala may be dissuaded for now, he can be counted on to resume his machinations against Deuba the next opportunity he sees. End summary.

NEW DELHI SAID TO NIX KOIRALA CAMPAIGN

[1](#)2. (C) Indian Ambassador to Nepal Singh told Ambassador Malinowski April 17 that Prime Minister Vajpayee, Minister for External Affairs Singh, Defense Minister Fernandes, Home Minister Advani, and the BJP President had each told former Nepali Prime Minister and current Nepali Congress Party President Girija Prasad Koirala, in New Delhi for a visit, to desist from efforts to topple his long-time rival, current Nepali PM Sher Bahadur Deuba. Ambassador Singh said G.P. seemed to have got the unambiguous message that the Indians would not support a change in government at the present and expected him to stand down.

NC GENERAL SECRETARY CALL ON AMBASSADOR

[1](#)3. (C) On April 17 Nepali Congress General Secretary (and G.P. cousin) Sushil Koirala called on Ambassador Malinowski at the Residence. Commending the April 15 all-party meeting that resulted in a unanimous decision to oppose the April 23-27 Maoist general strike, the Ambassador stressed the importance of party unity at this time of national crisis. (Note: Party leaders--including leaders of the Nepali Congress--had boycotted an earlier all-party meeting called by Deuba on March 27. End note.) Of course all political parties have differences and disagreements, the Ambassador observed; thus it is especially heartening to see the parties overcome these differences and stand united on this important issue. The USG fully recognizes the challenges before Nepal and wants to be helpful; the Embassy has asked for a package of security and development assistance to help Nepal overcome the threat from the insurgency. While we are pushing to get this assistance in Washington, it is good to know the political parties are doing what they can to help their own country in its hour of need, the Ambassador concluded.

[1](#)4. (C) Koirala said the Nepali Congress has been the main target of Maoist aggression because it has always been the champion of democracy. Only his party has organized all of the district party chairmen to oppose the Maoists, Koirala claimed. Why then should the Army Chief single out only Deuba and "a few young ministers" as the only ones helping the Army to stand up to the Maoists (Ref B). Koirala said he viewed the Army Chief's public comments as highly worrisome, especially in light of the Army's historical role in backing the Palace against the Nepali Congress in its early struggle to bring democracy to Nepal. Did the Army Chief's comments signal some darker intention? The Ambassador said both the military leadership, including the Army Chief, and the King had underscored to him on a number of occasions their respect for the Constitution. The Army has no intention of staging a

coup, the Ambassador said; to do so would cost them not only the support of the Nepali public but of foreign donors as well. In the continuing series of conversations with the Palace, government and security forces, the U.S. has always stressed the need for all to abide by the Constitution and to respect human rights.

15. (C) Why are foreign donors so supportive of Deuba? Koirala asked, adding he could not recall any previous PM receiving similar support. The Ambassador replied that friends of Nepal are committed to helping the country through this crisis. Nepal's friends support the government's effort and commitment to overcome this crisis, rather than a particular individual. He recalled during his previous tenure as DCM and Charge in Nepal the USG working closely with then-PM G.P. Koirala to give disaster relief assistance in the wake of especially destructive and unprecedented flooding. He also reminded Sushil Koirala of the help he and other foreign emissaries had provided G.P. in countering a series of violent bandhs in the early 1990s and in brokering a rapprochement between G.P. and the major opposition party. Neither the U.S. Embassy or the Ambassador himself is "for" or "against" any particular political personality, he emphasized; we support the democratically elected leader, whoever it is, attempting to lead Nepal out of this crisis. Koirala thanked the Ambassador for his views and left without raising a possible change in government.

16. (C) The Ambassador went over the same ground he went over with Sushil Koirala in an April 18 meeting with Nepali Congress MP and former Minister of Commerce and Health Ram Krishna Tamarakar, a long-time G.P. ally. Tamarakar, who also is very close to Sushil Koirala, had sought a meeting with the Ambassador, perhaps at the request of G.P.

COMMENT

17. (C) The message should be crystal clear to Koirala and his cohorts by now that a move to change PMs would not be welcomed by the Palace; the Army; the donors; Nepal's neighbor and largest trading partner, India; and, probably, nearly half of the Nepali Congress Party. (Sushil Koirala's visit to the Ambassador was preceded immediately by a call on the soon-to-be-departing British Ambassador, who, he told us, delivered a similar message in rather forceful tones. This may in part explain Sushil's reticence during his conversation with Amb. Malinowski.) India's input, if as reported, will likely prove critical in persuading G.P. Koirala to hold off on his campaign for now. We don't, however, expect him to be dissuaded for long. National crisis or not, at the earliest opportunity--and he always finds one--we expect G.P. to resume his chronic scheming to regain the post of prime minister.
MALINOWSKI